

Story 1470 (1989 Tape 8)

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The Golden Bird and the Two Brothers

Once in the past there were two brothers. One of them was poor and not very intelligent. The other brother was very rich and very cunning. The rich brother had no children, but the poor brother had two sons. These two boys always went to their uncle's house to eat

In order to earn a living the poor brother used to go hunting and shoot wild game. One day one of his shots brought down a golden bird. When he returned home with that bird, he showed it to his rich brother. The rich brother said, "That may be a cursed bird which will cause you a great amount of trouble. Give it to me, and I shall give you a good quantity of money in exchange for it.

Actually the golden bird was extremely valuable, and the rich brother knew this. It was worth much more than he paid for it, and so he cheated his brother. He then took the golden bird to his wife and said, "Woman, cook this bird for us and do not give even a scrap of it to anyone else. When I return this evening, just the two of us will eat all the meat of this bird."

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The woman cooked the bird with great care, and then she placed it on the kitchen table to cool. In the meantime, her two nephews came, as usual, to eat lunch. The careless woman forgot all about the bird on the table, and when she was not looking, the boys ate the heart of that bird. As you can see, it must have been the boys' fate to eat that bird heart. Apparently the golden bird was part of their kismet

After the boys had left, the rich brother's wife remembered the meal she had cooked for her and her husband's dinner, but she thought about it too late. She rushed to the table and there discovered that the heart of the golden bird was missing. Almost crazy with fear, she rushed outside and killed a chicken. After she had cooked that chicken, she placed its heart in the body of the golden bird.

In the evening when her husband returned home, the two of them sat down to dinner and ate the golden bird. Several days passed, but to the disappointment of the rich brother, nothing unusual happened as a result of their having eaten the golden bird. A short while later the rich man heard a report that every morning his two nephews had been finding a golden egg beneath their pillow when they awakened. Going to his brother, he asked if the report was true. "Yes, we find a golden egg beneath their pillow every morning. My money situation has

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changed greatly. I can now buy anything that I want."

rich brother now realized what had happened. "My wife must have let our two nephews eat the heart of that golden bird." He went home and forced his wife to tell him what had happened.

said, "Yes, Husband, our nephews must have eaten the heart of the golden bird. When I discovered that it was missing, I slaughtered a chicken, cooked it, and placed its heart in the body of the golden bird. I was afraid to tell you about that.

rich brother said, "Now I know why our eating of that bird did not have the effect that I expected." Going then to his brother, he said, "Oh, my dear brother, I am afraid that your two sons may give you great trouble. There must be something very unnatural about them. Kill these evil children, and I shall give you half of my fortune

The poor brother was not an intelligent man. In fact, he was quite stupid. Without giving the matter any serious thought, he accepted the suggestion that his wealthy brother had made. He went home and said to his wife, "Get our two sons ready to go with me to the forest to cut wood.

But his wife objected, saying, "Our children are too young to go to the woods and stay there all day with you. And

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certainly are not strong enough yet to cut wood all day.

Nevertheless, the father was influenced by his evil brother's suggestion, and so he took his sons to the forest with him.

they arrived there, however, he was unable to bring himself to the point of killing the two boys. Instead, he decided simply to abandon them deep in the forest. He said to them, "Boys, you can sleep here beneath this tree while I cut wood over there. I shall wake you up when I am finished and ready to go home." After the boys had lain down, he cut a wild gourd into the shape of a water dipper and hung it among some tree branches where he was working. Because it was

light in weight, it swung back and forth in the breeze striking the branches and making a tak tak sound similar to the sound of an axe striking wood. Even after their father had left the forest, the tak tak sound continued. When the boys woke up from time to time they heard what they thought

the sound of their father's axe and soon went back to sleep again

Forty-eight hours passed, and still their father did not return. When the boys discovered the water dipper swinging in the breeze and going tak tak, they understood that their father had deceived them and left them alone in the forest. One of them sang a verse:

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Tangur, tangur, my dipper gourd,  
We had a father who left us here.  
But could the fault be really his,  
Or was the fault our mother's instead?

But the other brother answered, "No, Brother! You are wrong!" Then he sang,

Tangur, tangur, my dipper gourd,  
We had a father who left us here.  
The fault for this was not his own.  
Our uncle was the cause of this.

After a while a hunter found these two boys in the forest. He asked them, "Where did you come from? Where is your home?" But the boys were still so young that they were unable to answer these questions. The hunter therefore took them home with him and reared them as if they were his own children. When they were old enough to carry rifles, he taught them to be brave and very skillful marksmen.

When the boys reached the age of sixteen, they began to ask questions about their family. "Who are our father and mother?" they asked.

The hunter was an honest man and he told them the truth about his relationship to them. "I am not your father. I found you in the forest when you were still very small, and

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since that time I have reared you as my sons." This honest hunter had also saved very carefully the golden eggs which

been appearing daily beneath the boys' pillows for several years, and the result was that the boys were by then very rich.

More time passed, and then one day the boys said to the hunter, "We grow more and more curious all the time about our mother and father. We wish to go and search for our real parents.

The hunter answered, "Very well. If you are determined to do this, you may go with my blessing, but before you leave, there is some advice which I want to give you. When you set forth on the only road that leads away from here, you will soon come to a junction, and there you should separate and go in different directions. As you approach that junction, you

see a large tree on the right side of the road. Drive into the trunk of the tree this special knife which I am giving you. After that, whenever either of you returns to that junction, you should examine the blade of that knife carefully. If there is any rust on the blade, that will mean that your brother is in great danger and that you should go to his assistance at once."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In Turkish folktales, there is a wide range of what may be called life tokens. Talismans and amulets are often much more than simple good-luck charms, for they are integrally related to the physical condition or even the life itself

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The boys agreed to follow this advice. They then kissed the hands of the hunter and bade him farewell. Just after they started upon their journey, they saw a female gazelle and they prepared to shoot this animal. Before they could do so, however, the gazelle spoke to them, saying, "Please, dear hunters, do not kill me, and I shall give you a pair of my children." The boys accepted this proposal and took the two young gazelles with them. In this same manner they acquired a pair of rabbits, a pair of foxes, and a pair of wolves before they reached the junction of the two roads.<sup>2</sup>

When they reached the junction, they drove the special knife into the tree, just as their foster father had directed of a human being or some other creature. Some life tokens are separable souls hidden in some secret place--a box, the stomach of a deer, the stomach of a fish--in order to protect the lives of their owners. If you can find the separable soul and destroy it, you thereby kill its owner. Sometimes, on the other hand, the life token must be kept in the possession of its owner. If it is taken away, the owner may lose consciousness or be transformed into some other form. Sometimes a life token is a gauge of a person's condition and is watched closely by its owner's friend or relative in order to keep posted on the welfare of the owner. It may be a gem which changes color if its owner is in serious trouble; it may be a knife which turns rusty for the same reason.

<sup>2</sup>Greatly telescoped here. In most variants there are more animals, and the parent of each set of animals is encountered separately and bargained with.

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them to do. Then the older brother said, "Oh, Brother, this is the place where we must part. I shall go toward the west, and you should go toward the east." After bidding each other farewell, they went in these opposite directions.

After traveling for some time, the boy who was going east arrived at a city where he noticed that everyone seemed to be in mourning. Black flags hung from many buildings, and it was very quiet throughout the city. People were wearing black clothing, and they very seldom spoke to each other. The younger brother stopped a man in the street and asked him for the reason for all of the mourning in that city. "All of the water used in this city comes from one large well at the edge of that mountain over there, but that well is controlled by a huge and merciless dragon. He will permit that water to flow to us only if he is given a human girl once a year. Each year a different family provides the girl to be given to the dragon, and this year it is the turn of the padishah's family. This is the time when the padishah's daughter will be sacrificed."

The boy asked, "Is there no one in this city who can kill that dragon?"

The man answered sadly, "No, there is no one here able to do that, for the dragon is very strong and very fierce.

After having received this information, the younger brother



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took his animals and went to the cave on the mountainside where the dragon lived. As he approached this cave, the boy saw the padishah's daughter preparing to serve a meal to the dragon. He called to her at once and said, "Don't give that food to the dragon. Give it to me and my animals. After eating it, we shall kill the dragon, and in that way you will be saved."

"Can you really do that? He is so huge and so strong," said the girl. But she gave him the food anyway.

Without answering the girl's question, the younger brother and his animals ate the food. Then they went to the dragon's cave and killed that monster.<sup>3</sup> The boy cut off the dragon's seven tails and seven heads, and from each head he cut the tongue. Then he put all of these parts of the dragon's body in a sack.

The padishah's daughter went to the boy and embraced him. She said, "You saved my life. You will be my beloved from now on. I shall tell my father about you, and he will give me to you in marriage."

The boy was exhausted from his struggle with the dragon, and the girl was also tired as a result of all the fear and excitement she had experienced. The two of them lay down

<sup>3</sup>The story is again telescoped at this point. The battle scene is usually presented dramatically and at some length, for dragon slaying is not an everyday occurrence.

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beneath a tree and fell asleep. When the younger brother's animals observed this, they decided that they should take turns standing guard over their master. But the rabbit then said, "I can endure sleeplessness better than any of the rest of you. Let me stand guard over him, and the rest of you can also sleep." The rabbit kept watch for some time, but it was so quiet there that after a while he too fell asleep.

In the meantime another person came to that place on the mountainside. He was one of the viziers who for some time had been secretly in love with the padishah's daughter. He went to the mountain to see whether the girl was still alive or dead, but when he arrived there, what he saw first was the huge body of the dead dragon. He was confused by this until he looked around and discovered the younger brother and the padishah's daughter sleeping beneath a tree with a sharp sword placed between them. He noticed also the animals sleeping near them. Realizing that the dragon must have been slain by the young man, he quickly drew his sword and cut off the head of the younger brother. The noise awakened the girl, and as soon as she opened her eyes she saw that the younger brother was dead. The vizier said, "Don't make any sound or awaken the animals. This boy is dead, and you will now tell your father that it was I who killed the dragon and saved you. Unless you

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promise to do that, I shall kill you too right now." The girl had no choice but to promise what he wished. As a result, the padishah gave his daughter to the vizier, and preparations were started for the wedding celebration

Back on the mountainside, the animals finally woke up and found their master with his head cut off. They were very sad about this and they talked among themselves about what they should do. The fox said, "I know of a very special plant which has the power to restore him. It is called Herb of Life.<sup>4</sup> I shall go and find some of this herb."

Animals have eyes within their hearts. Even we advanced people of the twentieth century cannot see the way animals see or feel the way animals feel. The eyes of our hearts have closed, and as a result we cannot see the whole truth. Well, there is no need to make a short story long. The fox went and found some Herb of Life and brought a bunch of it to the mountain-side. They rubbed some of this on the boy's neck and some of it on the base of his head, and then they rejoined the two parts. The boy immediately revived, stood up, and said, "Oh, I have slept for such a long time! Where is the padishah's daughter?" The animals then told him what had happened.

<sup>4</sup>The magic curative herbage is in other tales called the Grass of Life. See, for example, ATON tale 965.

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When he heard this, the younger brother returned immediately to the city. This time as he entered the city he saw signs of joy everywhere. The people were happy, and everyone seemed to be enjoying himself. He went back to the inn where he had spent his first night in the city. There he talked with the innkeeper. He said, "When I came here ten days ago, the whole city was in mourning, but now it is filled with laughter. What has happened to cause so much joy?"

"When you first arrived, the dragon was still alive. Now he is dead. One of the viziers of our padishah killed that dragon and saved the life of the princess. Now we are preparing for the wedding of the princess and that vizier.

Greatly angered by this news, the boy began wandering through the streets of the city with his animals. The padishah's daughter saw him one day and recognized him at once. She learned where he was staying, and then she went to her father and said, "Father, there is a great hunter staying at such and such a place in our city. I should like to have him invited to my wedding, and if he is not invited, I shall refuse to be married." The helpless padishah had the boy called to his presence.

When he arrived there, the younger brother asked, "O my padishah, how do you know that your vizier killed the dragon? How can you be sure about that? What evidence did he present

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to prove that he was the slayer of the dragon? I am asking these questions because I am really the one who killed the dragon, and here is my evidence to prove that." He then showed the padishah the dragon's seven heads, the seven tongues he had cut from those heads,<sup>5</sup> and the seven tails

After the padishah had examined this evidence, he called the vizier. He then said, "Close the door and tell me how you managed to kill the dragon." Frightened and very confused by the sight of the boy, the vizier could only stutter. Then the younger brother's animals began to talk, and they told the padishah the whole story, including the fact that the vizier had cut off the boy's head. When the padishah had heard all of this, he told one of his men to bring a mule. He had the vizier tied to the tail of the mule. When the mule was struck lightly with a whip, it ran away, dragging the vizier to his death.

The younger son said to the padishah, "My padishah, you are a very just man. Thanks to you, the truth is now known."

<sup>5</sup>The narrator is confused about this part of the story. There is no point in having the protagonist cut the tongues from the heads in the variant of the story he is relating. The tongues are important in a different (and more common) variant. In that variant the impostor takes the dragon heads to the palace as evidence of his having slain the dragon, but the protagonist had previously removed the tongues. In the denouement of the variant, the protagonist substantiates his claim to having been the dragon slayer by fitting each tongue into the head from which it had been cut.

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My words go this far.<sup>6</sup> May Allah be pleased with all of you. If I have made any mistakes or spoken any sentences incorrectly, I apologize for them.

<sup>6</sup>This is about 25 percent of this tale. Whether the narrator omitted the other 75 percent because he did not know it or because of a lack of time to tell it is not certain. The first sentence of the last paragraph would seem to indicate his awareness that there is more to the tale than he has told.